



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Fr. Bede's Talk
Priory Class of 2006's Mother -Son Brunch
June 2007

It is hard to know exactly what to say or if I am supposed to be speaking to mothers or sons on this occasion and at this time of transition, which is both difficult and exciting.

As I sat in my garden last night preparing for this, I started to collect my memories of this class. My first thought was that I could structure this talk by telling you about a memory I have of each of you. So many memories of your time in the Junior School came flooding back to me that as I worked my way through them I realized I would need more than one occasion to talk you through all of them! This left me in a bit of a quandary and I became increasingly desperate about what I was going to say.

I have a beautiful statue of Our Lady in my garden that was given to me by a priest-friend when I made my solemn vows. Mary is depicted under the ancient title *Sedes Sapientiae* — Seat, or better yet, Throne of Wisdom. She is standing holding her Divine Son very close to her. He appears to be curled up on her breast as if asleep. I pondered this statue for a long time and it gradually dawned on me what I wanted to pass on to both mothers and sons today.

With regard to mothers:

To hold our sons close to shelter and protect them is one of the most important roles a mother must play in a child's life. Don't let anyone tell you it is wrong to shelter a child. They do need — even if they don't always want — a safe place and a sense of security in the face of a very big and sometimes very hostile world. Children raised by wolves grow up to be animals; it is that simple. However, the challenge is to know when to let your sons go. Some of the young men in this room are ready, some less so. (Possibly a few here never will be! But, thank God, they are a small minority!) However, you are not robins pitching fledglings out of a nest. It is not a mother's part to determine when to let go. It is the son's difficult job to pull away, "when his hour had come" as it says in St. John's Gospel. This by the way is the Gospel for all mothers of young men, and I give it to ladies to ponder in the weeks, months and years ahead.

With regard to sons:

The image of the Christ Child asleep has much to say to each of you. Remember the title of the statue is *Sedes Sapientia*. Our Lady is the Throne of her son the King, he who is himself the way, the truth, and the life: Wisdom Incarnate. But in my statue, wisdom is asleep, quieted or dormant, if you will. It speaks of great potentiality and of important things to come. This, as you are all too well aware is your present situation. We have prepared you and trained you as well as we could, but what has to happen next is in your court, as they



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say. Go out into the world beyond Priory, confident. You have so much more than your considerable native gifts and talents. You have a culture rooted in a 1,500-year-old monastic tradition at your back as you face the 21st century, and you have the prayers of your spiritual fathers to count on when things seem unclear.

I would like to end by expressing a few words of gratitude, because gratitude should be our constant theme, not only between now and graduation, but throughout our lives. Gratitude to your parents and families; to your teachers, your coaches, your advisors; to the founders of our school and its many benefactors in this our Jubilee year. My special gratitude today is for each of you. I am so profoundly grateful that this class has been a part of my life. If I could be a bit more specific: I am grateful to have been able to be a priest for you. It has been my greatest happiness to have celebrated the sacraments with you. To have said Mass for you, especially to have celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you; to have sponsored you for Confirmation. I look forward to many Weddings and Baptisms, and it is my prayer that one day I will impose hands on at least one or two of you if God calls you to take on the joy and responsibilities of the priesthood yourselves. And finally I can look forward, in Christ, even to the sacraments of sickness and sadness because in Christ all things are one.

In short, live your lives in gratitude, cleave to Christ in his Church and his Sacraments — and come visit for tea!